

Classic Poetry Series

James Henry Leigh Hunt

- poems -

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James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784 - 1859)

Hunt's father was an American clergyman who came to settle in Southgate, Middlesex. Leigh attended Christ's Hospital school in London, and published his first book of poetry, *Juvenilia*, at the age of seventeen. The following year he set up the weekly *Examiner*, with his brother John. This was the first of a series of journals he edited, which included the *Reflector*, *Indicator*, *Companion*, *Tatler* and *London Journal*. The influence of literary magazines was very strong at this time, and Hunt was responsible for recognising and promoting emerging writers of the calibre of Keats, Shelley and Tennyson.

The popularity of his journalism was not without its drawbacks, however; in 1813 he and his brother were imprisoned for their attacks on the Prince Regent. The two years he spent in jail gained Hunt the reputation of a Liberal martyr, but it also damaged his health. On his release he rejoined a thriving literary society which included Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt and Thomas De Quincey, as well as several great Romantic poets; Shelley was introduced to Keats at Hunt's house.

In 1822 Hunt took his family to Italy, where he planned to start a new journal, *The Liberal*, in collaboration with Shelley and Byron. Unfortunately the venture was cut short when Shelley was drowned, and Hunt was left in serious financial trouble when Byron departed for Greece in 1824. He returned to England the following year, where he pursued his literary and journalistic career into his late sixties.

Hunt was a key figure in the development of English literature during the Romantic period, both as a writer and an editor. In poetry he turned to the Italians for what he called 'a freer spirit of versification' and the influence of the Elizabethans on his work was also significant. In addition to his own work, he was immortalised by Charles Dickens, in the character of Skimpole in *Bleak House*.

A Fish Answers

Amazing monster! that, for aught I know,
With the first sight of thee didst make our race
For ever stare! O flat and shocking face,
Grimly divided from the breast below!
Thou that on dry land horribly dost go
With a split body and most ridiculous pace,
Prong after prong, disgracer of all grace,
Long-useless-finned, haired, upright, unwet, slow!

O breather of unbreathable, sword-sharp air,
How canst exist? How bear thyself, thou dry
And dreary sloth? What particle canst share
Of the only blessed life, the watery?
I sometimes see of ye an actual pair
Go by! linked fin by fin! most odiously.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

A Night-Rain in Summer

Open the window, and let the air
Freshly blow upon face and hair,
And fill the room, as it fills the night,
With the breath of the rain's sweet might.
Hark! the burthen, swift and prone!
And how the odorous limes are blown!
Stormy Love's abroad, and keeps
Hopeful coil for gentle sleeps.

Not a blink shall burn to-night
In my chamber, of sordid light;
Nought will I have, not a window-pane,
'Twixt me and the air and the great good rain,
Which ever shall sing me sharp lullabies;
And God's own darkness shall close mine eyes;
And I will sleep, with all things blest,
In the pure earth-shadow of natural rest.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

A Thought of the Nile

It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream,
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal stands,--
Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands
That roamed through the young world, the glory extreme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,
The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.

Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us; and then we wake,
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

A Thought or Two on Reading Pomfret's

I have been reading Pomfret's "Choice" this spring,
A pretty kind of--sort of--kind of thing,
Not much a verse, and poem none at all,
Yet, as they say, extremely natural.
And yet I know not. There's an art in pies,
In raising crusts as well as galleries;
And he's the poet, more or less, who knows
The charm that hallows the least truth from prose,
And dresses it in its mild singing clothes.
Not oaks alone are trees, nor roses flowers;
Much humble wealth makes rich this world of ours.
Nature from some sweet energy throws up
Alike the pine-mountain and the buttercup;
And truth she makes so precious, that to paint
Either, shall shrine an artist like a saint,
And bring him in his turn the crowds that press
Round Guido's saints or Titian's goddesses.

Our trivial poet hit upon a theme
Which all men love, an old, sweet household dream:--
Pray, reader, what is yours?--I know full well
What sort of home should grace my garden-bell,--
No tall, half-furnish'd, gloomy, shivering house,
That worst of mountains labouring with a mouse;
Nor should I choose to fill a tawdry niche in
A Grecian temple, opening to a kitchen.
The frogs in Homer should have had such boxes,
Or Aesop's frog, whose heart was like the ox's.
Such puff about high roads, so grand, so small,
With wings and what not, portico and all,
And poor drench'd pillars, which it seems a sin
Not to mat up at night-time, or take in.
I'd live in none of those. Nor would I have
Veranda'd windows to forestall my grave;
Veranda'd truly, from the northern heat!
And cut down to the floor to comfort one's cold feet!
My house should be of brick, more wide than high,
With sward up to the path, and elm-trees nigh;
A good old country lodge, half hid with blooms
Of honied green, and quaint with straggling rooms,
A few of which, white-bedded and well swept,
For friends, whose name endear'd them, should be kept.
The tip-toe traveller, peeping through the boughs
O'er my low wall, should bless the pleasant house:
And that my luck might not seem ill-bestow'd,
A bench and spring should greet him on the road.

My grounds should not be large. I like to go
To Nature for a range, and prospect too,
And cannot fancy she'd comprise for me,
Even in a park, her all-sufficiency.
Besides, my thoughts fly far, and when at rest

Love not a watch-tow'r but a lulling nest.
 A Chiswick or a Chatsworth might, I grant,
 Visit my dreams with an ambitious want;
 But then I should be forc'd to know the weight
 Of splendid cares, new to my former state;
 And these 'twould far more fit me to admire,
 Borne by the graceful ease of noblest Devonshire.
 Such grounds, however, as I had should look
 Like "something" still; have seats, and walks, and brook;
 One spot for flowers, the rest all turf and trees;
 For I'd not grow my own bad lettuces.
 I'd build a cover'd path too against rain,
 Long, peradventure, as my whole domain,
 And so be sure of generous exercise,
 The youth of age and med'cine of the wise.
 And this reminds me, that behind some screen
 About my grounds, I'd have a bowling-green;
 Such as in wits' and merry women's days
 Suckling preferr'd before his walk of bays.
 You may still see them, dead as haunts of fairies,
 By the old seats of Killigrews and Careys,
 Where all, alas! is vanish'd from the ring,
 Wits and black eyes, the skittles and the king!
 Fishing I hate, because I think about it,
 Which makes it right that I should do without it.
 A dinner, or a death, might not be much,
 But cruelty's a rod I dare not touch.
 I own I cannot see my right to feel
 For my own jaws, and tear a trout's with steel;
 To troll him here and there, and spike, and strain,
 And let him loose to jerk him back again.
 Fancy a preacher at this sort of work,
 Not with his trout or gudgeon, but his clerk:
 The clerk leaps gaping at a tempting bit,
 And, hah! an ear-ache with a knife in it!
 That there is pain and evil is no rule
 That I should make it greater, like a fool;
 Or rid me of my rust so vile a way,
 As long as there's a single manly play.
 Nay, "fool"'s a word my pen unjustly writes,
 Knowing what hearts and brains have dozed o'er "bites";
 But the next inference to be drawn might be,
 That higher beings made a trout of me;
 Which I would rather should not be the case,
 Though Isaak were the saint to tear my face,
 And, stooping from his heaven with rod and line,
 Made the fell sport, with his old dreams divine,
 As pleasant to his taste, as rough to mine.
 Such sophistry, no doubt, saves half the hell,
 But fish would have preferr'd his reasoning well,
 And, if my gills concern'd him, so should I.
 The dog, I grant, is in that "equal sky,"

But, heaven be prais'd, he's not my deity.
All manly games I'd play at,--golf and quoits,
And cricket, to set lungs and limbs to rights,
And make me conscious, with a due respect,
Of muscles one forgets by long neglect.
With these, or bowls aforesaid, and a ride,
Books, music, friends, the day I would divide,
Most with my family, but when alone,
Absorb'd in some new poem of my own,
A task which makes my time so richly pass,
So like a sunshine cast through painted glass
(Save where poor Captain Sword crashes the panes),
That cold my friends live too, and were the gains
Of toiling men but freed from sordid fears,
Well could I walk this earth a thousand years.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Abou Ben Adhem

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the Presence in the room he said
"What writest thou?"—The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still, and said "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men."

The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

Anonymous Submission

James Henry Leigh Hunt

An Angel in the House

How sweet it were, if without feeble fright,
Or dying of the dreadful beauteous sight,
An angel came to us, and we could bear
To see him issue from the silent air
At evening in our room, and bend on ours
His divine eyes, and bring us from his bowers
News of dear friends, and children who have never
Been dead indeed,--as we shall know forever.
Alas! we think not what we daily see
About our hearths,--angels that are to be,
Or may be if they will, and we prepare
Their souls and ours to meet in happy air;--
A child, a friend, a wife whose soft heart sings
In unison with ours, breeding its future wings.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Death

Death is a road our dearest friends have gone;
Why with such leaders, fear to say, "Lead on?"
Its gate repels, lest it too soon be tried,
But turns in balm on the immortal side.
Mothers have passed it: fathers, children; men
Whose like we look not to behold again;
Women that smiled away their loving breath;
Soft is the travelling on the road to death!
But guilt has passed it? men not fit to die?
O, hush -- for He that made us all is by!
Human we're all -- all men, all born of mothers;
All our own selves in the worn-out shape of others;
Our used, and oh, be sure, not to be ill-used brothers!

James Henry Leigh Hunt

How Robin and His Outlaws Lived in The Woods

Robin and his merry men
: Lived just like the birds;
They had almost as many tracks as thoughts,
: And whistles and songs as words.

Up they were with the earliest sign
Of the sun's up-looking eye;
But not an archer breakfasted
Till he twinkled from the sky.

All the morning they were wont
To fly their grey-goose quills
At butts, or wands, or trees, or twigs,
Till theirs was the skill of skills.

With swords too they played lustily,
And at quarter-staff;
Many a hit would have made some cry,
Which only made them laugh.

The horn was then their dinner-bell;
When like princes of the wood,
Under the glimmering summer trees,
Pure venison was their food.

Pure venison and a little wine,
Except when the skies were rough;
Or when they had a feasting day;
For their blood was wine enough.

And story then, and joke, and song,
And Harry's harp went round;
And sometimes they'd get up and dance,
For pleasure of the sound.

Tingle, tangle! said the harp,
As they footed in and out:
Good lord! it was a sight to see
Their feathers float about;--

A pleasant sight, especially
: If Margery was there,
Or little Ciss, or laughing Bess,
: Or Moll with the clumps of hair;

Or any other merry lass
: From the neighbouring villages,
Who came with milk and eggs, or fruit,
: A singing through the trees.

For all the country round about
: Was fond of Robin Hood,

With whom they got a share of more
: Than the acorns in the wood;

Nor ever would he suffer harm
: To woman, above all;
No plunder, were she ne'er so great,
: No fright to great or small;

No,—not a single kiss unliked,
: Nor one look-saddening clip;
Accurst be he, said Robin Hood,
: Makes pale a woman's lip.

Only on the haughty rich,
: And on their unjust store,
He'd lay his fines of equity
: For his merry men and the poor.

And special was his joy, no doubt
: (Which made the dish to curse)
To light upon a good fat friar,
: And carve him of his purse.

A monk to him was a toad in the hole,
: And an abbot a pig in grain,
But a bishop was a baron of beef,
: With cut and come again.

Never poor man came for help,
And wnet away denied;
Never woman for redress,
And went away wet-eyed.

Says Robin to the poor who came
: To ask of him relief,
You do but get your goods again,
: That were altered by the thief;

There, ploughman, is a sheaf of your's
: Turned to yellow gold;
And, miller, there's your last year's rent,
: 'Twill wrap thee from the cold:

And you there, Wat of Lancashire,
: Who such a way have come,
Get upon your land-tax, man,
: And ride it merrily home.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Jenny kiss'd Me

Jenny kiss'd me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and welth have miss'd me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kiss'd me.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Jenny Kissed Me

Jenny kissed me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kissed me.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

May and the Poets

There is May in books forever;
May will part from Spenser never;
May's in Milton, May's in Prior,
May's in Chaucer, Thomson, Dyer;
May's in all the Italian books:--
She has old and modern nooks,
Where she sleeps with nymphs and elves,
In happy places they call shelves,
And will rise and dress your rooms
With a drapery thick with blooms.
Come, ye rains, then if ye will,
May's at home, and with me still;
But come rather, thou, good weather,
And find us in the fields together.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

On Receiving a Crown of Ivy from John Keats

It is a lofty feeling, yet a kind,
Thus to be topped with leaves;--to have a sense
Of honour-shaded thought,--an influence
As from great nature's fingers, and be twined
With her old, sacred, verdurous ivy-bind,
As though she hallowed with that sylvan fence
A head that bows to her benevolence,
Midst pomp of fancied trumpets in the wind.

It is what's within us crowned. And kind and great
Are all the conquering wishes it inspires,
Love of things lasting, love of the tall woods,
Love of love's self, and ardour for a state
Of natural good befitting such desires,
Towns without gain, and hunted solitudes.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Robin Hood, A Child.

It was the pleasant season yet,
When the stones at cottage doors
Dry quickly, while the roads are wet,
After the silver showers.

The green leaves they looked greener still,
And the thrush, renewing his tune,
Shook a loud note from his gladsome bill
Into the bright blue noon.

Robin Hood's mother looked out, and said
"It were a shame and a sin
For fear of getting a wet head
To keep such a day within,
Nor welcome up from his sick bed
Your uncle Gamelyn."

And Robin leaped, and thought so too;
And so he has grasped her gown,
And now looking back, they have lost the view
Of merry sweet Locksley town.

Robin was a gentle boy,
And therewithal as bold;
To say he was his mother's joy,
It were a phrase too cold.

His hair upon his thoughtful brow
Came smoothly clipped, and sleek,
But ran into a curl somehow
Beside his merrier cheek.

Great love to him his uncle too
The noble Gamelyn bare,
And often said, as his mother knew,
That he should be his heir.

Gamelyn's eyes, now getting dim,
Would twinkle at his sight,
And his ruddy wrinkles laugh at him
Between his locks so white:

For Robin already let him see
He should beat his playmates all
At wrestling, running, and archery,
Yet he cared not for a fall.

Merriest he was of merry boys,
And would set the old helmets bobbing;
If his uncle asked about the noise,
'Twas "If you please, Sir, Robin."

And yet if the old man wished no noise,
He'd come and sit at his knee,
And be the gravest of grave-eyed boys;
And not a word spoke he.

So whenever he and his mother came
To brave old Gamelyn Hall,
'Twas nothing there but sport and game,
And holiday folks all:
The servants never were to blame,
Though they let the physic fall.

And now the travellers turn the road,
And now they hear the rooks;
And there it is, — the old abode,
With all its hearty looks.

Robin laughed, and the lady too,
And they looked at one another;
Says Robin, "I'll knock, as I'm used to do,
At uncle's window, mother."

And so he pick'd up some pebbles and ran,
And jumping higher and higher,
He reach'd the windows with tan a ran tan,
And instead of the kind old white-haired man,
There looked out a fat friar.

"How now," said the fat friar angrily,
"What is this knocking so wild?"
But when he saw young Robin's eye,
He said "Go round, my child.

"Go round to the hall, and I'll tell you all."
"He'll tell us all!" thought Robin;
And his mother and he went quietly,
Though her heart was set a throbbing.

The friar stood in the inner door,
And tenderly said, "I fear
You know not the good squire's no more,
Even Gamelyn de Vere.

"Gamelyn de Vere is dead,
He changed but yesternight:"
"Now make us way," the lady said,
"To see that doleful sight."

"Good Gamelyn de Vere is dead,
And has made us his holy heirs:"
The lady stayed not for all he said,
But went weeping up the stairs.

Robin and she went hand in hand,
Weeping all the way,
Until they came where the lord of that land
Dumb in his cold bed lay.

His hand she took, and saw his dead look,
With the lids over each eye-ball;
And Robin and she wept as plenteously,
As though he had left them all.

"I will return, Sir Abbot of Vere,
I will return as is meet,
And see my honoured brother dear
Laid in his winding sheet.

And I will stay, for to go were a sin,
For all a woman's tears,
And see the noble Gamelyn
Laid low with the De Veres."

The lady went with a sick heart out
Into the kind fresh air,
And told her Robin all about
The abbot whom he saw there:

And how his uncle must have been
Disturbed in his failing sense,
To leave his wealth to these artful men,
At her's and Robin's expense.

Sad was the stately day for all
But the Vere Abbey friars,
When the coffin was stript of its hiding pall,
Amidst the hushing choirs.

Sad was the earth-dropping "dust to dust,"
And "our brother here departed;"
The lady shook at them, as shake we must,
And Robin he felt strange-hearted.

That self-same evening, nevertheless,
They returned to Locksley town,
The lady in a dumb distress,
And Robin looking down.

They went, and went, and Robin took
Long steps by his mother's side,
Till she asked him with a sad sweet look
What made him so thoughtful-eyed.

"I was thinking, mother," said little Robin,

And with his own voice so true
He spoke right out, "That if I was a king,
I'd see what those friars do."

His mother stooped with a tear of joy,
And she kissed him again and again,
And said, "My own little Robin boy,
Thou wilt be a King of Men!"

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Robin Hood, An Outlaw.

Robin Hood is an outlaw bold
Under the greenwood tree;
Bird, nor stag, nor morning air
Is more at large than he.

They sent against him twenty men,
Who joined him laughing-eyed;
They sent against him thirty more,
And they remained beside.

All the stoutest of the train,
That grew in Gamelyn wood,
Whether they came with these or not,
Are now with Robin Hood.

And not a soul in Locksley town
Would speak him an ill word;
The friars raged; but no man's tongue,
Nor even feature stirred;

Except among a very few
Who dined in the Abbey halls;
And then with a sigh bold Robin knew
His true friends from his false.

There was Roger the monk, that used to make
All monkery his glee;
And Midge, on whom Robin had never turned
His face but tenderly;

With one or two, they say, besides,
Lord! that in this life's dream
Men should abandon one true thing,
That would abide with them.

We cannot bid our strength remain,
Our cheeks continue round;
We cannot say to an aged back,
Stoop not towards the ground;

We cannot bid our dim eyes see
Things as bright as ever;
Nor tell our friends, though friends from youth,
That they'll forsake us never:

But we can say, I never will,
Friendship, fall off from thee;
And, oh sound truth and old regard,
Nothing shall part us three.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Robin Hood's Flight

Robin Hood's mother, these twelve years now,
Has been gone from her earthly home;
And Robin has paid, he scarce knew how,
A sum for a noble tomb.

The church-yard lies on a woody hill,
But open to sun and air:
It seems as if the heaven still
Were looking and smiling there.

Often when Robin looked that way,
He looked through a sweet thin tear;
But he looked in a different manner, they say,
Towards the Abbey of Vere.

He cared not for its ill-got wealth,
He felt not for his pride;
He had youth, and strength, and health,
And enough for one beside.

But he thought of his gentle mother's cheek
How it sunk away,
And how she used to grow more weak
And weary every day;

And how, when trying a hymn, her voice
At evening would expire,
How unlike it was the arrogant noise
Of the hard throats in the quire:

And Robin thought too of the poor,
How they toiled without their share,
And how the alms at the abbey-door
But kept them as they were:

And he thought him then of the friars again,
Who rode jingling up and down
With their trappings and things as fine as the king's,
Though they wore but a shaven crown.

And then bold Robin he thought of the king,
How he got all his forests and deer,
And how he made the hungry swing
If they killed but one in a year.

And thinking thus, as Robin stood,
Digging his bow in the ground,
He was aware in Gamelyn Wood,
Of one who looked around.

"And what is Will doing," said Robin then,
"That he looks so fearful and wan?"

"Oh my dear master that should have been,
I am a weary man."

"A weary man," said Will Scarlet, "am I;
For unless I pilfer this wood
To sell to the fletchers, for want I shall die
Here in this forest so good.

"Here in this forest where I have been
So happy and so stout,
And like a palfrey on the green
Have carried you about."

"And why, Will Scarlet, not come to me?
Why not to Robin, Will?
For I remember thy love and thy glee,
And the scar that marks thee still;

"And not a soul of my uncle's men
To such a pass should come,
While Robin can find in his pocket or bin
A penny or a crumb.

"Stay thee, Will Scarlet, man, stay awhile;
And kindle a fire for me."
And into the wood for half a mile,
He has vanished instantly.

Robin Hood, with his cheek on fire,
Has drawn his bow so stern,
And a leaping deer, with one leap higher,
Lies motionless in the fern.

Robin, like a proper knight
As he should have been,
Carved a part of the shoulder right,
And bore off a portion clean.

"Oh, what hast thou done, dear master mine!
What hast thou done for me?"
"Roast it, Will, for excepting wine,
Thou shalt feast thee royally."

And Scarlet took and half roasted it,
Blubbering with blinding tears,
And ere he had eaten a second bit,
A trampling came to their ears.

They heard the tramp of a horse's feet,
And they listened and kept still,
For Will was feeble and knelt by the meat;
And Robin he stood by Will.

"Seize him, seize him!" the Abbot cried
With his fat voice through the trees;
Robin a smooth arrow felt and eyed,
And Will jumped stout with his knees.

"Seize him, seize him!" and now they appear
The Abbot and foresters three.
"'Twas I," cried Will Scarlet, "that killed the deer."
Says Robin, "Now let not a man come near,
Or he's dead as dead can be."

But on they came, and with an embrace
The first one the arrow met;
And he came pitching forward and fell on his face,
Like a stumbler in the street.

The others turned to that Abbot vain,
But "seize him!" still he cried,
And as the second turned again,
An arrow was in his side.

"Seize him, seize him still, I say,"
Cried the Abbot in furious chafe,
"Or these dogs will grow so bold some day,
Even priests will not be safe."

A fatal word! for as he sat
Urging the sword to cut,
An arrow stuck in his paunch so fat,
As in a leathern butt,

As in a leathern butt of wine;
Or dough, a household lump;
Or a pumpkin; or a good beef chine,
Stuck that arrow with a dump.

"Truly," said Robin without fear,
Smiling there as he stood,
"Never was slain so fat a deer
In good old Gamelyn wood."

"Pardon, pardon, Sir Robin stout,"
Said he that stood apart,
"As soon as I knew thee, I wished thee out,
Of the forest with all my heart.

"And I pray thee let me follow thee
Any where under the sky,
For thou wilt never stay here with me,
Nor without thee can I."

Robin smiled, and suddenly fell
Into a little thought;
And then into a leafy dell,
The three slain men they brought.

Ancle deep in leaves so red,
Which autumn there had cast,
When going to her winter-bed
She had undrest her last.

And there in a hollow, side by side,
They buried them under the tree;
The Abbot's belly, for all its pride,
Made not the grave be seen.

Robin Hood, and the forester,
And Scarlet the good Will,
Struck off among the green trees there
Up a pathless hill;

And Robin caught a sudden sight,
Of merry sweet Locksley town,
Reddening in the sun-set bright;
And the gentle tears came down.

Robin looked at the town and land
And the church-yard where it lay;
And poor Will Scarlet kissed his hand,
And turned his head away.

Then Robin turned with a grasp of Will's,
And clapped him on the shoulder,
And said with one of his pleasant smiles,
"Now shew us three men bolder."

And so they took their march away
As firm as if to fiddle,
To journey that night and all next day
With Robin Hood in the middle.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Rondeau

Jenny kiss'd me when we met,
 Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
 Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
 Say that health and welth have miss'd me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
 Jenny kiss'd me.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Rondeau (Jenny Kissed Me)

Jenny kissed me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in.
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in.
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad;
Say that health and wealth have missed me;
Say I'm growing old, but add -
Jenny kissed me!

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Song of Fairies Robbing an Orchard

We, the Fairies, blithe and antic,
Of dimensions not gigantic,
Though the moonshine mostly keep us,
Oft in orchards frisk and peep us.

Stolen sweets are always sweeter,
Stolen kisses much completer,
Stolen looks are nice in chapels,
Stolen, stolen, be your apples.

When to bed the world are bobbing,
Then's the time for orchard-robbing;
Yet the fruit were scarce worth peeling,
Were it not for stealing, stealing.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

Sudden Fine Weather

Reader! what soul that loves a verse can see
The spring return, nor glow like you and me?
Hear the quick birds, and see the landscape fill,
Nor long to utter his melodious will?

This more than ever leaps into the veins,
When spring has been delay'd by winds and rains,
And coming with a burst, comes like a show,
Blue all above, and basking green below,
And all the people culling the sweet prime:
Then issues forth the bee to clutch the thyme,
And the bee poet rushes into rhyme.

For lo! no sooner has the cold withdrawn,
Than the bright elm is tufted on the lawn;
The merry sap has run up in the bowers,
And bursts the windows of the buds in flowers;
With song the bosoms of the birds run o'er,
The cuckoo calls, the swallow's at the door,
And apple-tree at noon with bees alive
Burn with the golden chorus of the hive.
Now all these sweets, these sounds, this vernal blaze,
Is but one joy, express'd a thousand ways:
And honey from the flowers and song from birds
Are from the poet's pen his overflowing words.

Ah friends! methinks it were a pleasant sphere,
If, like the trees, we blossom'd every year;
If locks grew thick again, and rosy dyes
Return'd in cheeks, and raciness in eyes,
And all around us, vital to the tips,
The human orchard laugh'd with cherry lips!
Lord! what a burst of merriment and play,
Fair dames, were that! and what a first of May!
So natural is the wish, that bards gone by
Have left it, all, in some immortal sigh!

And yet the winter months were not so well:
Who would like changing, as the seasons fell?
Fade every year, and stare, midst ghastly friends,
With falling hairs, and stuck-out fingers' ends?
Besides, this tale of youth that comes again
Is no more true of apple-trees than men.
The Swedish sage, the Newton of the flow'rs,
Who first found out those worlds of paramours,
Tells us, that every blossom that we see
Boasts in its walls a separate family;
So that a tree is but a sort of stand
That holds those afilial fairies in its hand;
Just as Swift's giant might have held a bevy
Of Lilliputian ladies, or a levee.
It is not her that blooms: it is his race,

Who honour his old arms, and hide his rugged face.

Ye wits and bards, then, pray discern your duty,
And learn the lastingness of human beauty.
Your finest fruit to some two months may reach:
I've known a cheek at forth like a peach.

But see! the weather calls me. Here's a bee
Comes bounding in my room imperiously,
And talking to himself, hastily burns
About mine ear, and so in heat returns.
O little brethren of the fervid soul,
Kissers of flowers, lords of the golden bowl,
I follow to your fields and tusted brooks:
Winter's the time to which the poet looks
For hiving his sweet thoughts, and making honied books.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

The Glove and The Lions

King Francis was a hearty king, and loved a royal sport,
And one day as his lions fought, sat looking on the court;
The nobles filled the benches, and the ladies in their pride,
And 'mongst them sat the Count de Lorge, with one for whom he sighed:
And truly 'twas a gallant thing to see that crowning show,
Valour and love, and a king above, and the royal beasts below.

Ramped and roared the lions, with horrid laughing jaws;
They bit, they glared, gave blows like beams, a wind went with their paws;
With wallowing might and stifled roar they rolled on one another;
Till all the pit with sand and mane was in a thunderous smother;
The bloody foam above the bars came whisking through the air;
Said Francis then, "Faith, gentlemen, we're better here than there."

De Lorge's love o'erheard the King, a beauteous lively dame
With smiling lips and sharp bright eyes, which always seemed the same;
She thought, the Count my lover is brave as brave can be;
He surely would do wondrous things to show his love of me;
King, ladies, lovers, all look on; the occasion is divine;
I'll drop my glove, to prove his love; great glory will be mine.

She dropped her glove, to prove his love, then looked at him and smiled;
He bowed, and in a moment leaped among the lions wild:
The leap was quick, return was quick, he has regained his place,
Then threw the glove, but not with love, right in the lady's face.
"By God!" said Francis, "rightly done!" and he rose from where he sat:
"No love," quoth he, "but vanity, sets love a task like that."

James Henry Leigh Hunt

The Negro Boy

Paupertas onus visa est grave.

Cold blows the wind, and while the tear
Bursts trembling from my swollen eyes,
The rain's big drop, quick meets it there,
And on my naked bosom flies!
O pity, all ye sons of Joy,
The little wand'ring Negro-boy.

These tatter'd clothes, this ice-cold breast
By Winter harden'd into steel,
These eyes, that know not soothing rest,
But speak the half of what I feel!
Long, long, I never new one joy,
The little wand'ring Negro-boy!

Cannot the sigh of early grief
Move but one charitable mind?
Cannot one hand afford relief?
One Christian pity, and be kind?
Weep, weep, for thine was never joy,
O little wand'ring Negro-boy!

Is there a good which men call Pleasure?
O Ozmyn, would that it were thine!
Give me this only precious treasure;
How it would soften grief like mine!
Then Ozmyn might be call'd, with joy,
The little wand'ring Negro-boy!

My limbs these twelve long years have borne
The rage of ev'ry angry wind:
Yet still does Ozmyn weep and mourn,
Yet still no ease, no rest can find!
Then death, alas, must soon destroy
The little wand'ring Negro-boy!

No sorrow e'er disturbs the rest,
That dwells within the lonely grave;
Thou best resource, the wo-wrung breast
E'er ask'd of Heav'n, or Heav'n e'er gave!
Ah then, farewell, vain world, with joy
I die the happy Negro-boy!

James Henry Leigh Hunt

The Nile

It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream,
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal stands,--
Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands
That roamed through the young world, the glory extreme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,
The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.
Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us; and then we wake,
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
'Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

To a Fish

You strange, astonished-looking, angle-faced,
Dreary-mouthed, gaping wretches of the sea,
Gulping salt-water everlastingly,
Cold-blooded, though with red your blood be graced,
And mute, though dwellers in the roaring waste;
And you, all shapes beside, that fishy be,--
Some round, some flat, some long, all devilry,
Legless, unloving, infamously chaste:--

O scaly, slippery, wet, swift, staring wights,
What is't ye do? What life lead? eh, dull goggles?
How do ye vary your vile days and nights?
How pass your Sundays? Are ye still but joggles
In ceaseless wash? Still nought but gapes, and bites,
And drinks, and stares, diversified with boggles?

James Henry Leigh Hunt

To Robert Batty, M.D., on His Giving Me a Lock of Milton's Hair

It lies before me there, and my own breath
Stirs its thin outer threads, as though beside
The living head I stood in honoured pride,
Talking of lovely things that conquer death.
Perhaps he pressed it once, or underneath
Ran his fine fingers when he leant, blank-eyed,
And saw in fancy Adam and his bride
With their heaped locks, or his own Delphic wreath.

There seems a love in hair, though it be dead.
It is the gentlest, yet the strongest thread
Of our frail plant,--a blossom from the tree
Surviving the proud trunk; as if it said,
Patience and gentleness in power. In me
Behold affectionate eternity.

James Henry Leigh Hunt

To the Grasshopper and the Cricket

Green little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass;
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;
Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong
At your clear hearts; and both were sent on earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song:
Indoors and out, summer and winter,--Mirth.

James Henry Leigh Hunt